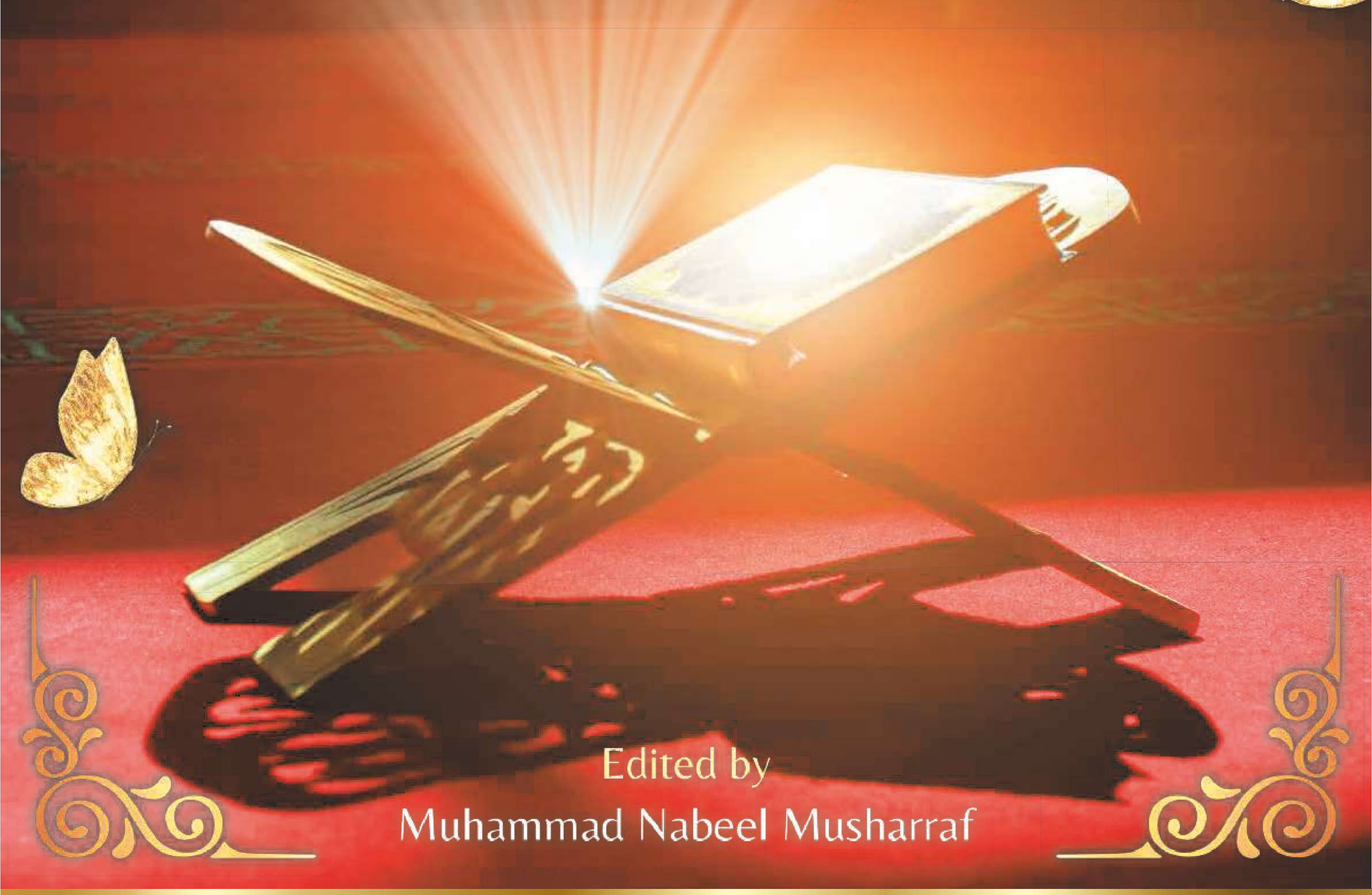
MUQADDIMAH AND DEEBACHA

TAFHEEM UL QURAN

Maulana Syed Abul Aala Maududi



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لَا نُرِيدُ مِنكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا

FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH ALONE! WE SEEK FROM YOU NEITHER REWARD NOR THANKS

QURAN 76:9

SAMA O BASR
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MUQADDIMAH AND DEEBACHA

TAFHEEM UL QURAN

Introduction to

THE MEANING OF THE QURAN

MAULANA SYED ABUL A'LA MAUDUDI

(Muqadimah and Deebach of Tafheem ul Quran)

Original English rendering: Ch. Muhammad Akbar

Re-editing, revision, comments, and annotation:

Muhammad Nabeel Musharraf

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

While re-editing the English translation of the *Muqaddimah*, we have practiced the following:

- Re-translated certain parts of the original translation as considered necessary.
- Added addition comments and insights in comment boxes or footnotes.
- Added additional headings as considered necessary.
- Added a fresh translation of the *Deebacha* as an appendix.

We hope that our readers will find it beneficial.

iCAN Sama-O-Basr

19 Feb 2023

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1. OBJECTIVES OF THIS MUQADDIMAH

The word 'Muqaddimah' as a title of what I have mentioned below should not confuse anyone that I am trying to write a foreword to the Quran. It is not a foreword to the Quran but of Tafheem ul Quran ('The Meaning of the Quran', a book of Tafseer).

I have two objects in view in writing this *Introduction* to the study of the Quran.

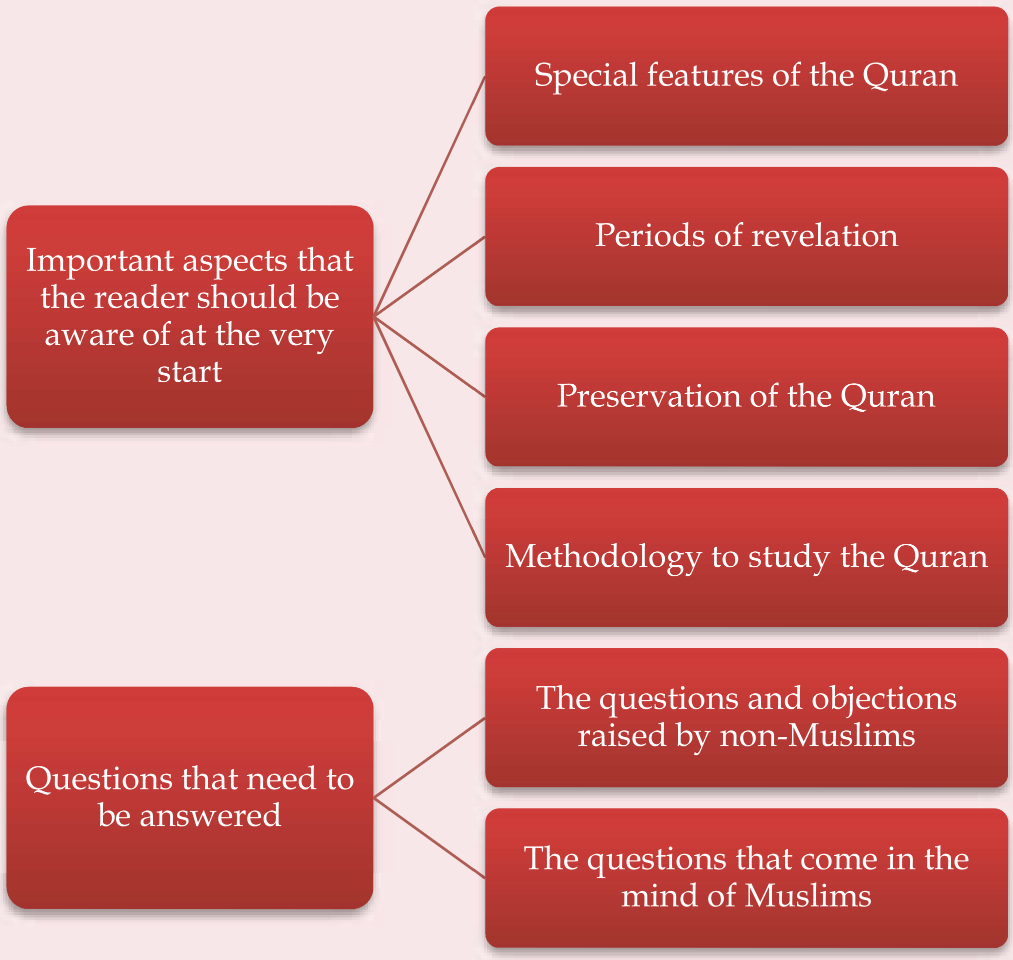
- One, I want to acquaint the reader with those things which will help him to understand the meaning of the Quran. If he does not become conversant with them in the very beginning, they will keep coming back into his mind over and over again, and often become a hindrance for him to do an in-depth study of the meaning and spirit of the Quran.

- Two, I want to answer beforehand some of the questions which usually arise during the study of the Quran. I have confined myself to those questions which arose in my own mind when I

began my critical study of the Quran, or the ones which I came across afterwards. If there be any other questions besides these, I will answer them in the next edition, inshaAllah.

Comment

The complete structure of this Muqaddimah is very well-summarized in the above two points. These two points can be sub-divided into the following themes:



2. QURAN AS UNIQUE BOOK

Before the reader begins the study of the Quran, he must bear in mind the fact that it is a unique Book that is quite different from the books one usually reads.

Comment

This section explains a very important feature of the Quran – its uniqueness as a book. If this aspect of the Quran is not understood and one tries to compare the Quran with the man-made books that one commonly finds around him, he would put a veil between him and the message of the Quran. On the other hand, if this aspect is understood well, the Quran would open its pearls of wisdom to the reader who understands this. He would then be able to understand the rationale of what comes where in the Quran and why; he would be able to relate it to what comes before it and after it.

2.1 An overview of the unique style of the Quran:

Unlike conventional books, the Quran does not contain information, ideas, and arguments about specific themes or topics arranged in a literary order. That is why a stranger to the Quran, on his first approach to it, is baffled when he does not find the enunciation of its theme or its division into chapters and sections or separate treatment of different topics and separate instructions for different aspects of life arranged in a serial order. Contrary to his expectations, he finds in it something with which he has not been familiar before and which does not conform to his conception of a book. He finds that it deals with matters related to creed, gives moral instructions, lays down various laws, invites people to Islam, admonishes the disbelievers, draws lessons from historical events, administers warnings, and gives glad tidings - all blended together in a beautiful coherent manner. The same subject is repeated in different ways. One topic follows the other without any apparent boundaries. Sometimes a new topic crops up in the middle of another without any apparent reason. The speaker and the addressees, and the direction of the address change without any notice. The division of chapters is not based on specific topics in sequential order. Historical events are presented but not as in history books. The problems of Philosophy and Metaphysics are treated

in a manner different from that of the textbooks on those subjects. Man and the Universe are mentioned in a language different from that of the natural sciences. Likewise, it follows its own method of solving cultural, political, social, and economic problems and deals with the principles and injunctions of law in a manner that is quite different from that of sociologists, lawyers, and jurists. Morality is taught in a way that has no parallel in the whole literature on the subject. That is why the unwary reader is baffled and puzzled when he finds all these things contrary to the general or common conception of a book. He begins to feel that the Quran is a book without any order or interconnection between its verses or continuity of its subject, or that it deals with miscellaneous topics in an incoherent manner, or that it had been given the form of a continuous book though it was not a book in the commonly accepted sense of the word.

2.2 The confusion that can be caused if the unique nature of the Quran is not understood:

Cunningly, the opponents of Islam raise strange objections against the Quran based on this. The modern followers of the Quran, as a result, adopt strange devices to ward off such doubts and objections. They either resort to escapism or put

forward strange interpretations to ease their minds. Sometimes they try to create artificial connections between the verses to explain away the apparent incoherencies, and as a last resort, they even accept the theory that the Quran deals with miscellaneous topics without any order or coherence. Consequently, verses are isolated from their context, and confusion is produced in the meanings.

This happens when the reader does not take into consideration the fact that the Quran is a unique book. It does not, like other books, enunciate at the very beginning the subject it deals with and the object it intends to achieve.

Its style and method of explaining things are also quite different from those of other books one commonly reads. It does not follow any common bookish order. Above all, it is not a book on religion in the sense this word is generally understood. That is why when a reader approaches the Quran with the common notions of a book, he is rather puzzled by its style and manner of presentation. He finds that in many places the background has not been mentioned and the circumstances under which a particular passage was revealed have not been stated. As a result of these things, the ordinary reader is unable to benefit fully from the most precious treasures

contained in the Quran, though occasionally he may succeed in discovering a few gems here and there.

The people who are not acquainted with these distinctive features of the Quran become victims of doubt. They seem to find miscellaneous topics scattered all over its pages and feel difficulties about its meanings. That is not the only problem they face; even those verses, which are absolutely clear, appear to them to be quite irrelevant in the contexts they occur.

2.3 The correct understanding in this regard:

The reader may be saved from all these difficulties if he is warned beforehand that the Book he is going to study is the only book of its kind in the whole world; its literary style is quite different from that of all other books; that its theme is unique and that his preconceived notions of a book cannot help him understand the Quran and can even become a hindrance in their study of this noble book. He should, therefore, first of all, free his mind from preconceived notions and get acquainted with the distinctive features of this Book. If this basic concept is understood, only then the reader can understand it.

3. ESSENTIALS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE QURAN

In order to understand the Quran thoroughly, it is essential to know the nature of this Book, its central idea, its aim and object, its style, the terms it uses, the method it adopts to explain things, and the background and circumstances under which various passages were revealed. [Let's ponder on some of these aspects:]

3.1 Nature of the Quran

Comment

This section explains our story. It explains the reason for our existence and the philosophy of human life. It explains the commands of Allah swt and the guidance with which He swt sent the first humans, our father Adam A.S. and mother Eve A.S., on earth. What happened to that guidance over the centuries? How did humans corrupt the original teachings? What did Allah swt do to

revive the guidance as a great mercy to human beings? All this explains the context of the deputation of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his noble mission. If one understands what is explained in this section, one would also be able to understand why certain commonalities exist between Quran and the previous scriptures. It would also become clear why the Quran negates the previous nations and previous scriptures on certain things. It accordingly purifies the guidance and strips away any impurities that humans added to it.

First of all, the reader should understand the real nature of the Quran. Whether one believes it to be a revealed book or not, one will have to consider, as a starting point, the same basis that has been put forward by the Quran itself as well as its bearer, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. And these bases are this:

i. The Lord of the Universe, its Creator, the Master, and the Sovereign created Man and bestowed upon him the faculties of learning, speaking, understanding, and discerning right from wrong and good from evil. He granted him freedom of choice, freedom of will, and freedom of action and gave him authority to acquire and make use of

things he is surrounded in. In short, He granted him a kind of autonomy and appointed him as His Vicegerent on the Earth, and instructed him to live in accordance with His Guidance.

ii. At the time, when the Lord of the Universe appointed Man as His Vicegerent, He warned him very clearly and precisely, leaving no doubt in his mind as to the kind of relations he should have with Him. God instructed Man: I am your Master and Sovereign and that of the whole universe; therefore, you should worship Me and none else. You are neither independent in My kingdom nor the subject of anyone else, to whom you might owe obedience or worship. You are being sent to the Earth with certain powers for a fixed time for your test. After that, you will have to return to Me. Then I will judge the deeds you did in the world and decide whether you succeeded or failed in the test. Therefore, the right course for you is to accept Me voluntarily as the Sovereign and worship Me alone; and act in the world according to the Guidance I shall send to you; and live on the Earth with the conviction and understanding that it is merely a place of your trial. Your real object in earthly life should be to come out successful in the final judgment. Therefore, any other course different from and opposed to the Divine

Guidance will be wrong. If you adopt the course told to you and get reminded through the divine guidance (and you have full liberty and freedom to adopt it), you will achieve peace and tranquillity in this world and win the home of eternal bliss and joy (Paradise) in the next world, to which you shall have to return. And if you follow any other course (and you are quite free to do so, if so you choose), you shall incur My disfavor, an eternal sorrow, and affliction in the Hereafter, where you shall be thrown into the abyss of Hell.

iii. After such a warning, the Owner of the Universe sent Adam and Eve (Allah's peace be upon them), the first human beings, to the Earth and gave them the guidance according to which they and their descendants were to live in this world. Thus, the first two human beings were not created in ignorance and darkness but were given very clear and bright Light and the Law they were to follow. This was Islam (submission to Allah). Before they left this world, they themselves practiced and taught the same message to their children and children's children and exhorted them to live as Muslims (obedient servants of Allah). But in the succeeding centuries, by and by, people swerved from this straight way of life (Islam) and adopted

different crooked ways.

iv. They not only lost the Guidance owing to their negligence but also tampered with it because of their wickedness. They attributed to others the qualities and powers of Allah and associated others to rank with Him as gods and ascribed His rights to others. They invented different kinds of religions (ways of life) by mixing up all sorts of superstitions, wrong theories, and false philosophies with the Guidance that was given by Allah. They discarded the right, just, and moral principles taught by Allah or corrupted them and made such laws of life as suited to their prejudices and lusts. Through this approach, they filled Allah's earth with chaos and iniquity.

v. Though this was a sad state of affairs, Allah did not will to force these corrupt people to follow the Right way as this would have been against the limited freedom of action which had been granted to man by Him; nor did He will to destroy them forthwith as soon as rebellion broke out against Him, as this would not align with the rules of life laid down for trial in this world. Instead of this, Allah took upon Himself, from the very beginning of man's life on Earth, to send His Guidance to him during his term of life, leaving him free to follow or not to follow it. Accordingly, he made

arrangements for the Guidance of mankind and appointed His Messengers from among the people themselves and bestowed upon them the knowledge of the Truth and the Right Way of life. They were charged with the mission to invite people to the Right Way from which they had strayed. The Messengers themselves believed in Allah and acted in accordance with the Guidance they received from him. They were raised in different nations in different countries and thousands of them were sent over thousands of years. They all had one and the same religion which was based on the Unity of God and accountability in the Hereafter. They all taught the same way of life that was taught to the first Man at the very start of his life in this world. They all followed the same Guidance, that is, those fundamental and eternal principles of morality and culture that were prescribed for the first Man from the very first day of his life. They all had the one and the same mission, that is, to invite all human beings to the same Guidance, and to organize them into one community. All those people who accepted their invitation became one community, which was duly bound to follow the Divine Guidance and to do its best and utmost to establish it and to guard it against any

transgressions.

vi. During their respective terms, these Messengers fulfilled their mission admirably well. But it is a pity that the majority of the people were not inclined to accept their invitation and even those who joined their community gradually became corrupt. So much so that some of these communities totally lost that Guidance, while others tampered with the Commandments of Allah and mixed them up with false things. Then the Lord of the Universe sent Muhammad ﷺ (Allah's peace be upon him) as His last Messenger to fulfill the same mission for which the other Messengers had been sent before him. He extended his invitation to all human beings, including the corrupt followers of the previous Messengers, and asked them to follow the Right Way. He organized all those who accepted the Divine Guidance into one community which, in its turn, was required to re-establish its collective way of life based on the Guidance and to exert its utmost to reform the world which had gone astray. The Quran, which was revealed to Muhammad ﷺ (Allah's peace be upon him) is the Book that contains that Invitation and that Divine Guidance.

3.2 The central theme of the Quran

Now that we have come to know the nature of the Quran, it has become easier to determine the subject it deals with, its central theme, and its aim and object.

3.2.1 The subject of the Quran:

The *subject* it deals with is "Man"; it discusses those aspects of his life that either lead to his real success or his failure.

3.2.2 The Central Theme:

The *central theme* that runs throughout the Quran is the exposition of reality and the invitation to the right way based on it. It declares that reality is the same that was revealed by Allah Himself to Adam A.S. at the time of his appointment as vicegerent, and to all the Messengers after him, and the right way is the same that was taught by all the messengers (peace be upon them all). It also points out that all theories about God, the universe, man and his relations with God, and the rest of His creation, that were invented by people and are contradictory to this reality and the right way are all wrong and that all the ways of life based on them are erroneous and lead to ruinous consequences.

3.2.3 The objective of the Quran

The objective of this book is to invite Man to that Right Way and to present clearly the Guidance that he has lost because of his negligence or has perverted by his wickedness.

Comment

What is explained in this section is extremely important to be understood. When one understands this, he would realize that the Quran is not a book of science but a book of signs. Its objective was not to explain all the scientific phenomena in it. Rather it deals with guidance. It explains everything that is required for this purpose. Similarly, Islam is not a book of history that should provide all historical details. That is why we do not see in it many of the details that historians would generally be interested to know (e.g. exact locations where certain things happened, names of people who were involved in certain events, and so on). The Quran skips most of these details and focusses on its main theme – guidance. The same is true for other fields too. The Quran provides guidance and principles about those fields and related sciences by the way while explaining its main topic. As explained, its objective is not to explain every possible detail within those branches of knowledge.

3.3 What will the reader find in Quran if these aspects are taken into consideration?

If the reader keeps these things in mind, he will find that there is no incongruity in the style of this book, no gap in the continuity of the subject, and no lack of interconnection between its various topics. As a matter of fact, this book is not irrelevant anywhere with regard to its Subject, its Central Theme, and its aim. From its very beginning to its very end, the different topics it deals with are so intimately connected with its Central Theme that they may be likened to the beautiful gems of the same necklace, despite their different colors and cues. The Quran keeps the same object in view, whether it is relating the story of the creation of the Earth, Heavens, or Man; or is referring to the manifestations in the Universe; or stating events from human history. As the aim of the Quran is to guide Man and not to teach Nature or History or Philosophy or any other science or art, it does not concern itself with these subjects in the manner that common books do. The only thing with which it is concerned is to expound the reality, to remove misunderstandings and misconceptions about it to impress the Truth upon the minds, to warn them of the consequences of wrong attitudes, and to invite humanity to the Right Way.

The same is true of the criticism of the creeds of the moral systems, or the deeds of men and communities, and of its discussions of the problems of Metaphysics, etc. That is why it states or discusses or cites a thing only to the extent relevant to its aims and objects and leaves out unnecessary and irrelevant details and turns over and over again to its Central Theme and to its invitation around which all of its topics revolve. When the Quran is studied in this light, no doubt is left that the whole of it is a closely reasoned argument and there is continuity of subject throughout the Book.

Comment

From the above, it is very clear that when reading the Quran, one should read it to seek guidance from it. If this objective is not achieved and other things are achieved than nothing is achieved.

4. CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE REVELATION OF THE QURAN

One cannot properly understand many of the topics discussed in the Quran and the ayat dealing with them unless one is acquainted with the background of their revelation. One should know the social, historical, and other antecedents or conditions which help explain any particular topic for the Qur'an was not revealed as a complete book at once; nor did Allah hand over a written copy of it to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (Allah’s peace be upon him) at the very beginning of his mission and command him to publish it and invite people to adopt a particular way of life. Moreover, it is not a literary work of the common conventional type that develops its central theme in a particular order; nor does it conform to the style of such a work.

The Quran adopts its own style to suit the guidance of the Islamic Movement that was started by Allah’s Messenger ﷺ under His direct command. Accordingly, Allah revealed the Quran piecemeal to

meet the requirements of the Movement in its different stages [which have been explained below].

Comment

As mentioned above, various passages of the Quran were revealed at different stages of the mission of the Prophet ﷺ. If that context and stage are not understood, one can misunderstand the divine rulings, or apply them in situations in which a different ruling and line of action would be applicable. It is therefore inevitable to understand the context. When the context of a particular surah or passage is understood, it then becomes easy to find its co-relation with other surahs and passages that were revealed in the same era. This type of study of the Quran also prepares those who are dedicating their lives to the mission of the Prophet ﷺ to be able to respond correctly to the situations that will come their way while they embark on this mission. Allama Iqbal in his poetry, in numerous instances, has explained this aspect. He beautifully connects the message of certain ayat of the Quran with the current situations to enable the reader to understand the relation of those ayat to the effort of the Islamic movement and the mission.

For example,

فضائے بدر پیدا کر، فرشتے تیری نصرت کو
اتر سکتے ہیں گردوں سے قطار اندر قطار اب بھی

Re-create the atmosphere of Badr. Angels would start to descend upon you rows after rows.

آج بھی ہو جو براہیم کا ایماں پیدا
آگ کر سکتی ہے اندازِ گلستاں پیدا

If the faith of Ibrahim A.S. can be produced again, fires would produce gardens again!

ستیزہ کار رہا ہے ازل سے تا امروز
چراغ مصطفوی سے شرار بولہبی

Since the beginning, the lamp of Muhammad ﷺ is in a battle with the fire of Abu Lahb; this battle will not end before this world ends.

When one reads Tafheem ul Quran, he would notice that Maulana Maududi almost always links the Surahs (and relevant passages) to one of the stages of the mission of the Prophet ﷺ mentioned below. Understanding the following stages would

therefore be very beneficial for anyone trying to ponder and reflect deeply on the message of the Quran and intending to utilize *Tafheem ul Quran* in this journey.

4.1 The first stage of the Islamic Movement – Early Makkan Era:

When the Holy Prophet ﷺ was commanded to start his mission at Makkah, Allah swt sent down the instructions that mainly dealt with the following three matters:

- Guidance for the Messenger ﷺ that he needed for his own preparation for the great work that was entrusted upon him.
- Basic knowledge of Reality and brief answers to the common misunderstandings that misled people who had adopted the wrong ways of life
- Invitation to accept the basic principles of morality and adopt the right attitude that alone leads to the success and welfare of humanity.

These early messages consisted of short and concise sentences and were couched in fluent and effective language to suit the taste of the people to whom they were first addressed. Their excellent literary style was

so appealing that it touched the core of their hearts. They were so charming that they attracted the attention of the hearers who began to repeat them because of their beauty and elegance. Though universal truths were enunciated in these messages, they were given a local color and were supported by arguments, examples, and illustrations from the environment with which its first addressees were quite familiar. In order to impress the addressees effectively, these early addresses were confined to their own history, their traditions, their beliefs, their morality, and their evil ways.

This early stage of the Movement lasted for four years or so. The key outcomes of this era were as follows:

- A few good people accepted its message and formed the nucleus of the future Muslim community.
- The large majority of the Quraish began to oppose the message because, in their utter ignorance, they thought that it hit hard at their vested interests and lusts and the old traditions of their forefathers.
- The message of the Quran started to spread beyond Makkah and Quraysh and began to reach other clans.

Comment

Islamic movements should never miss the sight of this first step of the mission. They need to create a nucleus of dedicated people who are aligned with the message and values of the mission. This core and nucleas should be so convinced about the truth that no hardship or attraction of the world would have the power to delude them away from their mission. If this initial first step is missing, the next steps in the mission cannot be successful. The scattered pieces of dust have to be brought together and put in the fire of struggle to convert them to a brick which can then do meaningful things.

تو خاک میں مل اور آگ میں جل
جب خشت بنے تب کام چلے

ان خام دلوں کے عنصر پر
بنیاد نہ رکھ تعمیر نہ کر

Get mixed in dust and burn in fire! When you become a brick, only then something meaningful can happen. Do not establish the foundations on the segmented materials of these raw and unrefined hearts! Do not raise walls upon them (to prevent a collapse).

It should also be kept in mind, that when certain people rise and challenge the norms in society, they inevitably face resistance and opposition from the upholders of what they oppose. They should be ready for that and know what is required of them in that stage of the mission. If they persist and persevere, Allah will open ways for them.

4.2 The second stage of the Islamic Movement – Later Makken Era:

Then the Movement entered its second stage which continued for nine years or so, and a fierce struggle began with the old order. Not only the Quraish, but also the majority of the upholders of the old system also rose up to kill, or at least suppress, this Movement by employing all sorts of weapons. They made false propaganda, leveled accusations, and raised frivolous objections against it. They spread suspicions and doubts in order to alienate the common people from it. They hindered strangers from listening to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and inflicted all sorts of cruelties on those who accepted Islam. They boycotted the Muslims socially and economically in order to intimidate and coerce them. Their

persecution became so unbearable that some of the Muslims had to leave their homes twice for Abyssinia, and at last, all of them had to migrate to Al-Madinah. But despite this persecution and hindrances, the Movement continued spreading. There was hardly any family or household left in Makkah from which one person or the other had not accepted Islam. Naturally, this produced even more bitterness in the hearts of the opponents of Islam. The persecution became harsher when they saw that their own brothers, nephews, sons, daughters, sisters, etc., had accepted Islam and become its faithful and strong supporters and were ready to defend it by even sacrificing their lives.

The Movement also got impetus from the fact that it was drawing into its fold the best from among its opponents; they became the embodiments of virtue after accepting Islam. The world, therefore, could not help feeling the moral superiority of the Movement that was so thoroughly transforming the characters of its followers.

All through this long and bitter struggle, Allah swt continued to reveal, according to the requirements of the occasion, inspiring addresses which highly influenced the thoughts and conduct of the hearers.

On the one hand, these addresses instructed the Muslims in their primary duties, infused into them the spirit of loyalty and devotion to bind them together as members of the Muslim community, and taught the ways of piety, high morality, and purity of character and trained them to be true missionaries of Islam. These messages consoled, comforted, and encouraged the Muslims with promises of success in this world and of eternal bliss in the hereafter. They urged them also to exert their utmost in the way of Allah swt with fortitude endurance and courage. The Muslims were so imbued with the spirit of sacrifice for this noble cause that they were ready to bear every kind of affliction and fight against the bitterest opposition at the same time.

On the other hand, in this stage of revelation, Allah swt also gave warnings to those people who were opposing the Movement and those who were indifferent to it. Examples were cited from the history of the neighboring peoples. Their attention was also drawn to the ruins of the habitations by which they used to pass during their journeys: these were held out as object lessons. They were asked to observe the phenomena of Nature they saw day and night on the earth and in the heavens as proof of God and of the inevitable Hereafter. The mistakes in their thinking

and the errors in their blind following of their forefathers were exposed. The confusions which they carried themselves and also put in others' hearts were refuted one after the other. They were also informed about the consequences of their ill actions and the frightening state of affairs for those who would be going to hell for their actions. These revelations admonished the blasphemy of the idolaters and provided clear proof about the fallacy of this approach in such a vividly clear manner that was sufficient to convince all fair-minded persons. They refuted the misconception regarding God and the hereafter with such dear reasoning as to leave no doubt in their hearts and minds. In short, these addresses proved clearly and conclusively that the old ways were based on ignorance and were in clear opposition to the Right way.

These early addresses also put forward those basic principles of culture and morality which have always been universally accepted and which have always formed the basis of enlightened Divine civilizations.

Several changes took place during the Makki stage of the Movement. It spread wider and wider, day by day, and the opposition to it became stronger and stronger in the same proportion. By and by it came into contact with people of different creeds and

different ways of life and this gave rise to some new problems that required to be addressed. The discourses, therefore, took a different style as well. This explains the difference in their style from those of the earlier ones.

This is the background of the Surahs which were revealed during the thirteen years of prophetic mission in Makkah.

4.3 The third stage of the Islamic Movement – Madinan Era

After facing opposition for thirteen years in Makkah, the Islamic Movement found a new center in Al-Madinah where it now became possible to collect all the followers of Islam from various parts of Arabia and to unify and strengthen them. Accordingly, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the majority of the Muslims migrated to Al-Madinah.

The Movement now entered its third stage under totally changed conditions. Now that the Muslim community had succeeded in founding a regular state, an armed encounter ensued with the exponents of the old order of ignorance. Besides this, the Jews and the Christians also came into conflict with it, even though they also professed to be the followers of the

Prophets. The Movement also had to deal with different kinds of hypocrite 'Muslims' now who had, somehow, outwardly professed to come into its fold. But despite all those obstacles, it succeeded in subduing the whole of Arabia after a hard struggle of ten years and was in a position to extend its universal message of reform to the outer world.

As, by and by, several changes took place in this stage and every changed condition had its own special problems and requirements, Allah swt revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ the kind of discourses that were required for these particular occasions. We see a range of aspects and topics covered in these discourses. Some of these were couched in the fiery rhetoric warning people about their actions, and the others were in the form of the royal edicts of the ultimate law giver. Some adopted the methods of a teacher, trainer, and reformer and taught the principles and the methods of organizing a community; building up a state, and constructing a good civilization for the conduct of different affairs of life. Others gave instructions for dealing with the hypocrites or the unbelievers, who had come under the protection of this Islamic State.

Then in some of these discourses, the Muslims were taught the kind of relations they should have with the

people of the Book, with the belligerent powers, and with their own allies. In others, they were taught, trained, and organized to carry out their obligations as vicegerents of the Lord of the Universe.

Some gave instructions for their guidance, warned them of their weaknesses, and exhorted them to sacrifice their lives and properties in the way of Allah swt. Others taught the moral lessons they needed in defeat and victory, adversity and prosperity, war and peace, and so on. In short, these discourses trained them to carry on the missionary work for the propagation of Islam as the successors of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Then some discourses invited to Islam the people of the Book, the hypocrites, the unbelievers, and the blasphemers; they rebuked them for their hard-hear redness and warned them of the doom in store for them. They admonished them for neglecting lessons from the stories and events or the past, to leave no excuse for their sticking to the wrong ways of life.

This is the background of the Surahs that were revealed during the ten years of prophetic mission in Al-Madinah. It is obvious that their style had to be different from that of the Makki Surahs [considering the situations and contexts in which they were

revealed].

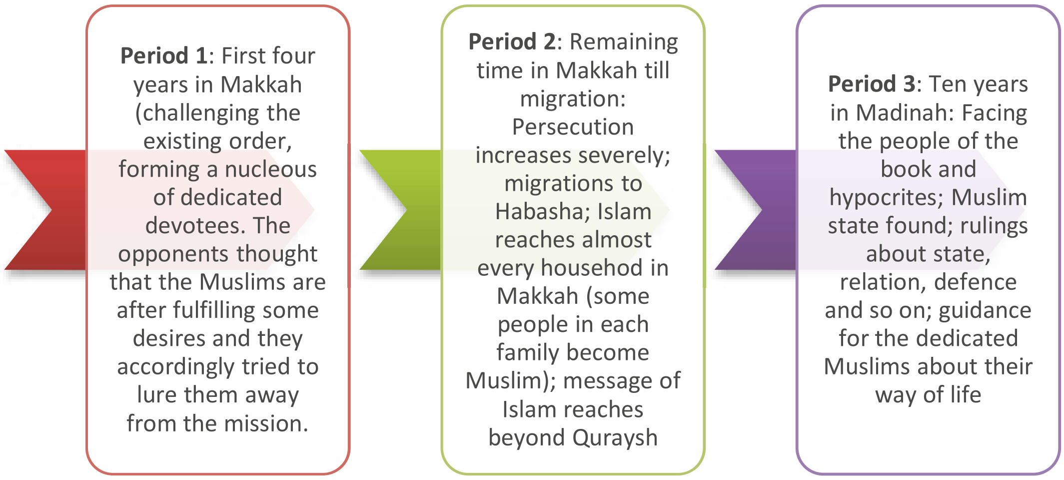


Figure: Overview of 3 key stages of periods of revelation

5. STYLE OF THE QURAN

Comment

If it is understood well that Quran is in the form of a speech, a lot of confusion and misunderstanding can be removed. It would then make perfect sense why certain topics emerge in between other topics and why the Quran changes its addressees within the same surah and so on. This aspect becomes even clearer when the mutual relationships between groups of Surahs, individual surahs, passages, and ayat are understood well.

5.1 Why the style of the Quran is that of a Khitab

It becomes clear from the above that the revelation of the Quran began simultaneously with the beginning of the Islamic Movement and continued for twenty-three years as the movement progressed through its different stages. It is thus obvious that a book like this cannot have the kind of format or composition that is expected from formal books on religion or doctorate

theses. It should also be kept in mind that the various passages of the Quran, long and short, were not meant to be published in the form of pamphlets at the time of their revelation but were to be delivered as addresses and promulgated as such. That is why their style was also like that of a speech or Khutbah rather than a written book. And that speech was not like that of a professor giving lectures, but that of a Dai or caller who is meant to inspire and appeal the hearts, intellect, and emotions. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was entrusted with a special mission and had to appeal both to the emotions and to the intellect; he had to deal with people of different mentalities and cope with different situations and various kinds of experiences during the course of his mission. He had to do all that was required for extending the message and for leading the movement. He had to impress the different aspects of his message on people's minds in order to change the established world of ideas, and to appeal to the feelings and emotions in order to counteract the forces of his opponents. He had also to train and reform his followers and to imbue them with spirit and courage, and to refute the arguments of opponents and to expose their moral weaknesses and so on.

That is why the style of the discourses that Allah sent

down to His Messenger ﷺ had to suit the requirements of the Movement that he was leading. It is, therefore, wrong to seek the style of a formal book or that of college lectures in the discourses of the Quran.

5.2 The reason for the repetition of certain topics and themes in the Quran

This also explains why certain messages are repeated in Quran over and over again. A mission and a movement naturally demand that only those things should be presented which are required at a particular stage and that nothing should be said about the requirements of the next stage. That is why the same things are reminded over and over again as long as the movement remains in the same stage, no matter whether it remains there for months or years. Of course, the repeated messages have been differently worded and styled differently to avoid monotony and couched in beautiful and dignified language to make them effective and impressive.

The Quran repeats at suitable places the fundamental principles in order to keep the Movement strong at every stage. The Surahs which were revealed at a particular stage of the Movement generally deal with the same topics, though, of course, the wording and

form changes to provide new thinking perspectives.

Comment

It can be noticed that at several places in the *Tafheem ul Quran*, Maulana Maududi mentions certain passages where an explanation of a particular topic is already provided. Because of this approach, one learns about the other passages that were revealed in the same era and can have a holistic view of them.

All the Surahs of the Quran contain references to the basic creed, i.e., the unity of Allah, His attributes, the Hereafter and accountability, punishment and reward, Prophethood, belief in the Book, etc. They all teach piety, fortitude, endurance, faith, trust in Allah, and other fundamental teachings, as these virtues and basics could not be neglected at any of the stages of the Movement. If any of these bases had been weakened at any stage even in the least, the Islamic Movement could not have made any progress in its true spirit.

6. IMPORTANT ASPECTS RELATED TO THE ORDER OF THE QURAN

6.1 Why are the ayat and surahs in the Quran not organized in the same order in which they were revealed?

A little reflection on the above-mentioned aspects clarifies why the Quran was not compiled in the order in which it was revealed. This question is also important because it has been used by the enemies of Islam to create misunderstandings about the Quran and to make ridiculous conjectures about the present arrangement of the Surahs. They are of the opinion that "Muhammad's ﷺ (Allah's peace be upon him) followers published the Quran, without any discernible order as to chronology or otherwise; merely trying, as would seem, to put the longest chapters first".

Such conjectures as this are based on ignorance of the wisdom underlying the order of the Quran. Though it was to be the Book for all times, it had to be revealed piecemeal in twenty-three years according to the

needs and requirements of the different stages through which the Islamic Movement was passing. It is obvious that the sequence of the revelations that were meant to guide the movement in its various phases could not be equally suitable for situations and conditions after the completion of the revelation. In the early stages of the Movement, the Quran addressed those people who were totally ignorant of Islam and, therefore, it was required to teach them the basic articles of Faith as the first thing. But after its completion, the Quran was primarily concerned with those who had accepted Islam and formed a community for carrying on the work entrusted to it by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Obviously, the order of the complete Book had to be different from its chronological order to suite the requirements of the Muslim Community for all the times to come.

In that situation, it was inevitable to acquaint the Muslims thoroughly with their duties concerning the regulation of their lives. It had also to prepare them for carrying the message of the Quran to the world to which it was ignorant. It had also to warn them of the mischiefs and evils that appeared among the followers of the previous Prophets so that they should be on the guard against them. Hence Al-Baqarah and similar Madani Surahs, and not Al-Alaq and similar

Makki Surahs, had to be placed at the beginning of the Quran.

6.2 Why are all the Makki surahs and all the Madani surahs not grouped together?

In this connection, another important thing should also be kept in view. It does not suit the purpose of the Quran that all the Surahs dealing with similar topics should be grouped together. In order to avoid one-sidedness at any stage of its study, it is essential that the Makki surahs should intervene between the Madani Surahs and that the Madani surahs should follow the Makki Surahs; and that the Surahs revealed at the earliest stages of the Movement should come between those revealed in the later stages, so that the entire picture of the complete Islam should always remain visible before the reader. That is the wisdom of the present order of the Quran.

6.3 Who decided the order of the Quran?

It should also be noted that the surahs of the Quran were not arranged in the present order by Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ (may Allah's peace and blessing be upon him) successors but by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself as per the guidance of Allah swt. Whenever a Surah was revealed, he would send for one of his

amanuenses and dictate it word for word and direct him to place it after such and such and before such and such a Surah. Likewise in this case of a discourse or passage or verse that was not meant to be an independent Surah by itself, he would direct him to the exact place where it was to be put in the Surah of which it was to form a part, then he used to recite the Quran during the Salat (prescribed prayer) and on other occasions in the same order, and direct his companions to remember and recite it in the same order. Thus, it is an established fact that the Surahs of the Quran were arranged in the present order on the same day the Quran was completed by the one to whom it was revealed under the guidance of the One who revealed it.

7. COMPILATION OF THE QURAN IN THE FORM OF A MUSHAF

7.1 The process of compilation

7.1.1 Preservation of the Quran through the efforts of the companions during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ

Allah swt Who revealed the Quran Himself made arrangements for its safety and security forever. No sooner was a passage of the Quran revealed than it was recorded on leaves of date-palm, barks of trees, bones, etc., at the dictation of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and all these pieces were put in a bag. Besides this, some of his Companions themselves wrote these pieces for their own use. At the same time, the Muslims committed these passages to memory as they had to recite them during *Salat* which was obligatory from the very beginning of Islam. Though many companions had committed the whole of the Quran to memory during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it had not been compiled in the form of a book.

7.1.2 Martyrdom of Huffadh:

But immediately after his ﷺ death, an event occurred that necessitated this work. A furious storm of apostasy broke out and many of the companions, who went to war to suppress it got martyred. Among these martyrs were some of those who had committed the whole of the Quran to memory. Then it occurred to Umar R.A. that necessary steps should be taken to preserve the Quran intact in its original form against any and every kind of danger and that it was not enough to depend exclusively upon those who had memorized it by heart.

7.1.3 Agreement of *Shaykhain* to put the Quran in writing in full

He, therefore, urged that it was essential to record all of it in a written manner in the form of an authenticated book. He tried to impress the necessity of this step on Abu Bakr R.A. who at first showed hesitation to do what the Holy Prophet ﷺ had not done. But after some discussion, he agreed to it. Accordingly, he entrusted this work to Zaid bin Thabit R.A. who also showed hesitation at first like Abu Bakr R.A., and for the same reason. But at last, he got convinced and undertook this historic work.

7.1.4 Zaid Ibn Thabit's R.A. procedure for the compilation of the Quran

He was best qualified for this work. He had frequently acted as an amanuensis to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and was one of those Companions who had learned the Quran directly from him[1]. Moreover, he also was present on the occasion when the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the whole of the completed Quran to the angel Gabriel. Arrangements were, therefore, made to collect and gather all the written pieces of the Quran left by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and those in the possession of his Companions. Then with the co-operation of those Companions who had committed

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[1] It was narrated that Zaid bin Thabit R.A. said: Abu Bakr R.A. sent for me when many of the people of al-Yamamah were killed. Abu Bakr R.A. said: O Zaid bin Thabit! You are a wise young man and we trust you; you used to write down the Revelation for the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). Seek out the Qur'an and collect it.

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو كَامِلٍ، حَدَّثَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ سَعْدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ شِهَابٍ، عَنْ عُبَيْدِ بْنِ السَّبَّاقِ، عَنْ زَيْدِ بْنِ ثَابِتٍ، قَالَ أَرْسَلَ إِلَيَّ أَبُو بَكْرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ مَقْتَلَ أَهْلِ الْيَمَامَةِ فَقَالَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ يَا زَيْدُ بْنَ ثَابِتٍ أَنْتَ غُلَامٌ شَابٌّ عَاقِلٌ لَا نَتَّهِمُكَ قَدْ كُنْتَ تَكْتُبُ الْوَحْيَ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَتَتَبَّعْ الْقُرْآنَ فَاجْمَعْهُ.

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the whole or any part of the Quran to memory word for word, all the written pieces were compared with each other for verification. Zaid R.A. would not take down anything in his manuscript unless all three sources were tallied with one another. Thus was compiled one correct, authenticated, and complete copy.

This authenticated copy of the whole Quran was kept in the house of Hafsah R.A. – the daughter of Umar R.A. and one of the wives of the Holy prophet ﷺ. It was proclaimed that anyone, who desired, might make a copy of it or compare with it the copy he already possessed.

7.2 The order of the surahs during the compilation

7.2.1 Zaid R.A. knew the order in which the Prophet ﷺ recited it:

As regards the sequence of the Surahs, Zaid R.A. followed the same order that was followed by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself because he could not and would not have followed any other. He was so particular about following the Holy Prophet ﷺ in everything he did, that, at first, he hesitated to undertake the work of the compilation, just because this had not been done during the lifetime of the Holy

Prophet ﷺ. It is, therefore, wrong to suppose that the Surahs were arranged in their current order after the death of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The very fact, that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the whole of the Quran twice before Gabriel during the last Ramadan of his life, is clear proof of the fact that he must have followed some order. And we have already cited a tradition to the effect that Zaid R.A. attended the second of these two last recitals. [Imam Malik says that the Quran was compiled in the way the Companions heard it from the Holy Prophet ﷺ.]

7.2.2 The Quran was always meant to be a book

[At several places, the Quran speaks of itself as a Book. For example, in Surah Muzzammil, an early Makki revelation, Allah swt says to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "recite the Quran in order" LXXI1I: 4. This also shows that the Quran was meant to be a book from the beginning of the revelation and a book must follow some order.]

8. DIFFERENCE OF DIALECTS

8.1 Different dialects were initially allowed

Though Arabic was the common language of the whole of Arabia, there existed some variations in the dialects of different parts and tribes. For obvious reasons, the Quran was revealed in the dialect of the Quraysh of Makkah. However, the Arabs living in different parts of the country were, at first allowed, for the sake of facility, to recite it according to the dialect of their own clan or district but this did not produce any difference in its meanings.

8.2 Prohibition of the dialects and idioms that were different from the copy compiled on the order to Abu Bakr R.A.

However, when Islam spread beyond the boundaries of Arabia and the Arabs came into contact with non-Arab Muslims, the Arabic language gradually began to be influenced by its new environments. Then it was feared that the different dialects of the Quran might give rise to various kinds of mischief and might cause

disputes among persons having different dialects. They might even begin to accuse one another of tampering with the Quran. Moreover, there was the danger that the pure and beautiful Arabic of the Quran might be altered or changed by those Arabs who came in contact with non-Arabs.

Therefore, Caliph 'Uthman, in consultation with other Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, decided that the authenticated copies of the Quran compiled by the order of Abu Bakr R.A. should alone be used in the whole of the Muslim world, and the use of all other copies in any other dialect or idiom should be prohibited. As a precautionary measure, he had all the other existing copies burnt to ward off any possibility of future confusion and misunderstanding. For instance, some of the companions had noted down explanatory words and comments on the margins of their copies and it was feared, that these might get mixed up with the original text of the Quran. Though such a possibility did not exist at that time, it was an act of most prudent foresight to make the Quran safe and secure against any possible alteration in the future by burning all other copies.

8.3 Preservation of the Quran is an undisputable matter

The Quran, which is now in use all over the world, is the exact copy of the Quran which was compiled by the order of Abu Bakr R.A. and the copies of which were officially sent by Uthman R.A. to different places. Even today many very old copies are found in big libraries in different parts of the world and if anyone has any doubt as to whether the Quran has remained absolutely safe and secure against every kind of change and alteration, he can compare any copy of the Quran with any of these copies and reassure himself. Moreover, if one gets a copy of the Quran from a bookseller, say, of Algeria in Africa in the West and compares it with a copy obtained from a bookseller, say, of Java in the East, one will find both the copies to be identical to each other and also to the copies of the Quran made during the time of Uthman R.A. If even then anyone has any doubt left in his mind, he is advised to take any copy of the Quran that he can get hold of from anywhere in the world and ask anyone, out of the millions who know the Quran by heart, to recite it word for word from the beginning to the end. He will find that the recitation conforms word for word to the written text. This is a clear and irrefutable proof of the fact that the Quran which is in use today is the same Quran that was presented to the world by Muhammad ﷺ (Allah's peace be upon him). A skeptic might entertain a

doubt about its revelation from Allah, but none can have any doubt whatsoever regarding its authenticity, immunity, and purity from any and every kind of addition, omission, or alteration. There is nothing so authentically proven and well-established in the whole human history as this fact about the Quran – it is the same Quran that was presented by the Holy Prophet ﷺ to the world.

8.4 Variant readings of the Quran

Now let us consider the case of the variant readings of the Quran, for their existence has created a misunderstanding that the original text of the Quran has not remained intact. The following facts will help us to understand their nature and extent:

i. The Arabic script adopted by the amanuenses of the Holy Prophet ﷺ during his lifetime had neither dots nor vowel points. The same was the case with the copy of the Quran compiled by Zaid R.A. during the time of Abu Bakr R.A. and also with its copies circulated by Uthman R.A.
ii. Though the correctness of the Quranic text was ensured in the written forms, the work of its propagation was done orally because of the general illiteracy and scarcity of paper. Little difficulty was, however, felt by the literate Arabs

in deciphering this script. There were thousands of such persons who had learned the whole of the Quran by heart from the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself and his Companions. They followed and taught the same reading that they had learned from the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions.

iii. Uthman R.A. not only sent an authenticated copy of the Quran to the different centers of Islam but also sent a Qari along with it in order to preserve that correct reading which was taught by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself.

iv. With the passage of time, it was felt that there should be vowel points to preserve the correct reading of the Quran. Accordingly, at the instance of Zaid, the Governor of Basrah (45 to 53 A. H.), dots were assigned for vowel points. Then during the reign of Abdul-Malik (65-85 A.H.), Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf appointed scholars to assign new symbols for vowel points and dots to distinguish between similar letters. The same practice continues to the present time.

From the above historical facts, it must have become clear that the reading of the Quran (with a few minor variations) is the same as practiced and taught by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. All the scholars and Qurra of the Quran have been unanimous in asserting that only

that reading will be authentic which

(a) conforms to the script of the copy circulated by Uthman R.A. and
(b) complies with the lexicon of Arabic, its usages idioms, and grammar, and above all,
(c) is traceable by genuine and continuous links to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself.

That is why there are only a few variations in its reading and those are not contradictory in their meanings but enlarge their scope and make them more comprehensive.

Thus, there is absolutely no doubt that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself practiced those various readings in the instances which exist today, and they make the meanings more comprehensive.

For example, let us take the two authentic readings of verse 3 of Al-Fatihah and verse 6 of Al-Ma'idah.

(d) One correct reading of I:3 is

مَـٰلِكِ يَوْمِ ٱلدِّينِ,

which means 'The King of the Day of Judgement' and the other reading

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ ٱلدِّينِ

means 'The Owner of the Day of Judgement'. It is obvious that these two readings make the meaning of the verse all the more clear.

(e) One reading of V:6 is

فَٱغْسِلُوا۟ وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى ٱلْمَرَافِقِ وَٱمْسَحُوا۟ بِرُءُوسِكُمْ
وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى ٱلْكَعْبَيْنِ

which means: "wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, wipe your heads with wet hands and wash your feet to the ankles.". The second reading, on the other hand, is:

فَٱغْسِلُوا۟ وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى ٱلْمَرَافِقِ وَٱمْسَحُوا۟ بِرُءُوسِكُمْ
وَأَرْجُلِكُمْ إِلَى ٱلْكَعْبَيْنِ

which means: "wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, wipe your heads with wet hands and wipe your feet to the ankles." The second reading allows one to wipe one's feet with wet hands, provided that one had washed one's feet and put on thick socks after the performance of the previous ablution. This concession holds good for 24 hours at home and for 72 hours during a journey. It is obvious from the two instances that in the variant readings, there is absolutely no contradiction in essence. On the other hand, they make the meanings all the more

comprehensive. And the same is true of all the other variant readings.

9. UNIVERSALITY OF THE QURAN

Comment

Sometimes confusion can arise in the minds of people that the Quran only talks about the Arabs. This confusion is compounded by the pseudo-researchers and orientalists who start making theories without properly reflecting upon the Quran. This confusion not only promulgates in the hearts of not-yet-Muslims but also in the hearts of those Muslims who are not deep-rooted in their understanding of the Deen. In this section, Maulana has dismantled such objections and confusions and explained the approach with which one can easily understand that this message was neither for a limited period nor for a particular group of people. It is universal; one can easily establish this through an unbiased reading of the Quran, through reflection upon its message, and by understanding how the various systems of life and concepts emerge and propagate in general.

9.1 Is Quran only for Arabs?

Everyone knows that the Quran claims to provide guidance for the whole of mankind, but when one reads it, he finds that it is mainly addressed to the Arabs, who lived at the time of its revelation. Though at times, it also addresses other people and mankind in general, it mainly discusses those things which appealed to the taste of the Arabs and were linked with their environment, history, and customs. This naturally gives rise to the question: Why does the Quran contain so many local and national elements of the period in which it was revealed, when it was meant for the guidance of the whole of mankind? Those who do not understand the wisdom of this, begin to argue like this: the Quran was actually meant for the reform of the Arabs of that period but after a while, somehow or the other, the claim was made that it was a guidance for the whole of mankind and for all ages.

9.2 The challenge to find a command that was only relevant to the Arabs

If one does not raise this objection merely for the sake of objection but actually wants to understand the matter, I would advise him to read the Quran and mark the parts which give rise to this doubt. He

should then point out any idea or principle therein that might have been meant particularly for the Arabs of that period only. He should lay his finger on any moral principle, practical rule, or regulation that is not of universal application and was meant only for the Arabs of that period, time, and place. The mere fact, that the Quran refutes the blasphemous creeds and condemns the evil customs of a particular people, living at a particular time and place and bases arguments for the Oneness of God on the material gathered from their environment, is not sufficient proof to establish the allegation that its invitation and appeal were local and temporary. We should examine the question closely and decide whether what it says regarding the blasphemous people of Arabia is or is not equally true of every period and every place, and whether we can or cannot apply the same arguments with equal force to refute the blasphemy of every time and every place, and whether we can or cannot use everywhere, with minor adjustments or customizations (as per the given situation), the same arguments that the Quran puts forward for the Oneness of God. If the answer to these questions is in the affirmative, then there is no reason why such a universal revelation should be dubbed as local or temporary, simply because it was addressed to a particular community and during a particular period.

9.3 The method of introduction to philosophies, religions, and way of life throughout the world

There is no philosophy, no way of life, and no religion in the world which expounds, from the beginning to the end, everything in the abstract without making any reference to particular cases or concrete examples, for it is simply impossible to build a pattern of life merely in the abstract. Even if we suppose, for the sake of argument, that such a system can exist, it will always merely remain a theory on paper and will never take a practical shape.

9.4 Do all international movements start at all places at once?

It is neither necessary nor useful for any ideological movement that is meant to be ultimately international or global to start, from the very outset, on international lines. The only right method of beginning this will be to start the movement in the country of its origin and present with full force its theories and fundamental principles which are to form the basis of the required system of life. Then its exponents should impress these things on the minds of their own people who have a common language, common habits, and common customs. They should, first of all, put these principles into practice in their

own country and prove their worth by evolving a happy and successful system of life. This will naturally attract other nations, and their intelligent people will themselves come forward to understand the movement and start it in their own countries.

9.5 Differences of attributes in the systems and concepts according to their scope

A certain ideological system cannot simply be labelled as 'a system for a particular people only', or 'a system for some locals only', simply because it was at first presented to a particular nation and its arguments were addressed to a particular people. As a matter of fact, what distinguishes a 'national' or 'local' from an 'international' or 'global', and a 'temporary' from a 'permanent' system is this:

- A national system aims either to establish its own superiority or its special claim over other nations or presents principles and theories which, by their very nature, cannot be applied to other nations.
- On the other hand, a global system grants equal status and equal rights to all human beings and puts forward principles of universal application.
- Moreover, the principles of a temporary system become impracticable with the passage of time;
- On the other hand, the principles of a permanent

system are applicable at all times.

If one studies the Quran in the light of the above, he will come to the conclusion that its teachings are of universal application without even an any iota of doubt.

10. SUNNAH – AN ESSENTIAL CO-REQUISITE TO STUDYING THE QURAN

10.1 Role of the Prophet ﷺ

Another thing that causes mental confusion is the oft-repeated assertion that the Quran is a complete code of life. But when one reads it, one does not find detailed rules and regulations regarding social, cultural, political, and economic problems… One, therefore, gets baffled to see that it does not contain any detailed regulations about even Salat and Zakat which are such important obligatory duties that the Quran itself lays great emphasis on them over and over again. This is the reason why a casual reader cannot understand how this Book can be called a complete code.

This confusion is caused because the objector loses sight of the fact that Allah did not only send down the Book but also appointed His Messenger ﷺ to demonstrate its teachings by putting them into actual practice.

10.2 Explanation with an example

To illustrate this, we may take the case of the construction of a building. If only a plan of the proposed building is laid down and no engineer is appointed to supervise and direct its construction, then every intricate detail must be supplied. But if an engineer is also appointed along with the plan to construct the building on the spot, obviously there is no need for detailed and intricate step-by-step instructions (which would make the plan almost impossible to be frequently referred to, by everyone, and in full). In the given scenario, only a sketch with the essential features of the plan will be quite enough. It would, therefore, be wrong to find fault with such a plan as being incomplete.

As Allah swt sent His Messenger along with the Quran, only general principles and absolutely essential instructions were needed and not their details. Hence the main function of the Quran is to present clearly the intellectual and moral bases of the Islamic Way and reinforce them with arguments and appeals that impact the hearts.

10.3 Construction of the Islamic way of life

As far as the practical side of building the Islamic way

of life is concerned, it only defines the limits and bounds of every aspect of life without giving detailed rules and regulations. Moreover, it fixes signposts for guidance at certain important places to show how those parts are to be constructed in accordance with Allah's will. The actual work of building the Islamic way of life in accordance with the instructions contained in the Book was entrusted to the Holy Prophet ﷺ - who was specially sent to set up the pattern of life for the individual, for the society, and for the Islamic State - to be constructed practically according to the principles of the Quran. Thus, the Quran is a complete code in the sense that it is to be taken along with the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

11. THE QURAN AND THE MATTER OF DIFFERENCES IN OPINION

Comment

This section explains a very important topic – how to deal with the difference of opinion. In this, Maulana has explained two ways in which people hold a difference of opinion and two approaches in which people express it. One of these ways is healthy and the other extremely damaging. We should therefore understand these approaches well and adopt that method of the difference of opinion which promotes goodness and unity in society.

Another matter that troubles the minds of people is that of diversity and differences in the interpretation of the Quran. People say that on the one hand, the Quran condemns very severely those people who create differences in the Book of Allah and cause division in their religion; on the other hand, so many different interpretations of the injunctions of the

Quran have been made that there is hardly to be found any command with an agreed interpretation. And it is not the people of the later periods alone who differ with one another but even the great scholars of the early period, including the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and their followers, did not all agree in every detail in regard to commands and prohibitions.

Do all these people then deserve the condemnation pronounced in the Quran for making different interpretations? If this is not so, then what kind of differences of opinion have been condemned in the Quran?

11.1 Healthy difference of opinion:

This problem is very vast and extensive, and this brief introduction is not the place for its detailed discussion. Suffice it is to say here that the Quran is not against the healthy difference of opinion in the interpretation of its injunctions provided that:

a) there is agreement on the basic principles of Islam among those who differ and
b) they remain united within the fold of the Muslim Community.

11.2 Unhealthy difference of opinion:

The Quran deprecates that kind of divergence which:

a) starts with self-worship and crookedness and
b) leads to disputes and sectarianism.

11.3 Difference between the two approaches mentioned above:

As the two kinds of divergence are neither alike in their nature nor in their results, they should not be placed in one and the same category.

The first kind of divergence is essential for progress and is the very soul of life and every community of intelligent and thinking people must encourage it. Its existence is a sign of life and only that community can afford to repress it which desires to have only blockheads in it.

The second kind of divergence, as everyone knows, disintegrates the community which nourishes it; therefore, its appearance in a community is not a sign of health but a symptom of a disease and it can never produce good results.

11.4 An example to illustrate the two types of differences in opinion

These two kinds of divergencies of opinion may further be illustrated by the following:

Suppose, there are two scholars or two judges, who agree on the principle that Allah swt and His Messenger ﷺ alone are entitled to obedience and that the Quran and the Sunnah are the final authority to determine all laws and regulations. If they then differ in the details of the rulings or the judgments they give (while adhering to the criteria mentioned above and using their most honest and best judgment), it would be an acceptable difference of opinion provided that neither of them makes his opinion as the criterion of Islam or un-Islam and neither of them declares the other to be outside the fold of Islam on account of such a difference of opinion. They may put forward their own arguments in support of their opinions and leave the decision to the public, or to the highest court in case of judicial matters, or to the legislative body of the community in case it is something that concerns them. If so happens, either one of the two opinions will prevail or both of them will be accepted.

11.5 Difference of opinion about the non-fundamentals:

It should be noted particularly that difference can neither be allowed in the basic principles of Islam nor

in those matters which lead to the formation of a new community within the community (or a faction outside of it). For instance, it would be wrong for a scholar or a jurist or a saint or a leader to form an opinion about some matter (which Allah and His Messenger ﷺ do not consider to be fundamental) and declare it to be a fundamental principle of Islam and then denounce all those who differ from him to be outside its fold, and then on this basis, proceed to form a community of his own followers saying: "This is the real Muslim Community and all those who are outside it are doomed to Hell; Therefore, if you are a Muslim, come and join it, otherwise you are not one." It is this kind of difference of opinion that the Quran condemns.

11.6 The difference of opinion among the companions and early generations

As regards the first kind of difference, several instances of it occurred during the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. He not only permitted it but also spoke well of it for it was a healthy sign, which showed that intelligent people of the community were busy thinking and exerting an intellectual effort. This also showed that the intelligent people of the community were taking interest in Islam and its teachings and were trying to find solutions for the

problems of life from the teachings of Islam and not from outside of it. It also provided a proof of the golden rule that while the community should remain united on principles, it should, at the same time, grant freedom of research to its thinkers within due limits so that the doors of progress should remain open.

12. SUGGESTIONS REGARDING HOW TO STUDY THE QURAN

Comment

Maulana Maududi has given the suggestions below for those who wish to extract the solutions to the problems of the world from the Quran. This, to him, is one of the most important reasons to deep-dive in the Quran. The same can be emphasized during our Quran circles and other programs, i.e., identifying what can be practically done.

Finally, here are a few suggestions for the study of the Quran. As different people turn to the Quran with different aims and objectives, it is not possible to offer any general advice about the method of its study so as to fulfill the requirements of all. I am, however, interested only in those people who want to understand it and seek guidance from it to extract and implement the solutions to the problems that humanity is facing. It is for these people for whom I

will, therefore, offer some suggestions which may help satisfy their needs and remove their difficulties.

12.1 Study with an open mind detached from pre-conceived notions and biases:

The no. 1 pre-requisite for understanding the Quran is to study it with an open and unbiased mind. Whether one believes it to be a revealed book or not, one should, as far as possible, free one's mind of bias in favour of or against it and get rid of all pre-conceived opinions. He should then approach it with the sole desire to understand what it actually is.

Those people who study it with preconceived notions of their own, read only their own ideas between its lines and cannot, therefore, grasp what the Quran wants to convey.

Comment

What Maulana has referred in the above passage is known as ‘confirmation bias’. Confirmation bias is the tendency of people's minds to seek out information that supports the views they already hold. It also leads people to interpret evidence in ways that support their pre-existing beliefs, expectations, or hypotheses. If we read the Quran from this perspective, we will only be looking for

endorsement for some personal, sectarian, or other pre-conceived opinions. This will prevent us from taking the maximum benefit from the Quran. We should, therefore, avoid this bias when studying the Quran.

It is obvious that this method of study can never be fruitful even with other books, but it is utterly fruitless when applied to the study of the Quran.

12.2 Read it and then re-read if one wishes to gain a deeper understanding:

There is another very important thing that must be kept in view. If one wants to merely have a cursory acquaintance with the contents of the Quran, then perhaps it might suffice for him to read it once. But, if one wishes to have a deep knowledge of it, one will have to go through it several times and **each time from a different perspective**.

Comment

The Quran can be looked at from a variety of perspectives. For each perspective, it would bring to light many new things that one was previously not aware of. It is therefore recommended to keep

reflecting upon the Quran from cover-to-cover again and again. We can do this exercise from theological, historical, grammatical, social, economic, political, legal, psychological, educational, scientific, and many other perspectives.

Those, who desire to make a thorough study of the Quran should read it at least twice with the sole purpose of understanding, as a whole, the system of life it presents.

12.3 Make a log of questions and read the Quran to find their answers:

One should also try to find out its **fundamental principles** and the **way of life** it aims to build on them.

Comment

Over here, Maulana Maududi is encouraging us to ponder upon the themes and fundamental principles in the Quran. These principles can then be seen working in the Islamic way of life and its various systems. When finding solutions to problems of the world, and when trying to define

the Islamic way to deal with economics, law, social settings, systems of states, and so on, these principles or common themes or bigger objectives should be kept in consideration.

During this preliminary study, if some questions occur in his mind, the reader should note them down and patiently continue his study for he is likely to find their answers somewhere in the Quran itself. If he finds answers to his questions, he should note them down along with the questions. But if he does not find an answer to any question in his first reading, he should patiently make the second reading. I can assure this in the light of my own experience that in the second reading, there would hardly be any question that would be left unanswered.

Comment

This highlights the importance of reflective reading. Many of us do the mistake of trying to finish the reading or reflecting upon the Quran quickly. Maulana is asking us for the contrary. We should spend due time reflecting upon the Quran. We should have an arrangement in place to write the questions that come to our minds. We should

then keep referring back to those questions and record the answers we find for them. The process should repeat itself and our lives should remain connected with the Quran.

iCAN urges you to make a Quran journal. When you attend the Quran circles, lectures, courses, and so on, please note important lessons learned in your journal. Please use it for recording the questions and answers and a summary of learnings.

12.4 Focus on the themes within the Quran:

After getting a general insight into the Quran in this way, one should begin its detailed study and take down notes of the different aspects of its teachings. For instance:

- one should note down what pattern of life it approves and what it disapproves.
- One should note down the qualities of a good man and those of a bad man, side by side, in order to bring both the patterns clearly before his mind simultaneously.
- Similarly, one should note down, side by side, those things which lead to the success and

salvation of man and those which lead to his failure and ruin.

- In the same way, he should put down, under different headings, the teachings and instruction of the Quran about creed, morality, duties, obligations, civilization, culture, economics, politics, law, social system, peace, war and other human problems.

These notes should be consolidated to form a complete sketch of each aspect of the teachings and then fitted together to form a complete system of life.

Comment

The above passage from the Muqaddimah explains the structure of the **Quran Journal** mentioned above, i.e. separate headings from various topics and various comparisons.

12.5 How to find solutions to the problems of the world:

If one desires to find out the Quranic solution to a certain human problem, he should first study the relevant literature, both ancient and modern, and note down the relevant details. He should also review the

prior research into the problem and note down the relevant points. He should then study the Quran with a view to finding out the answers to those issues.

Comment

This explains the importance of referring to all available useful information in order to enhance our understanding of the Quran. For example, if one is studying Surah An-Nahl, it makes perfect sense to research how bees function and how they make their hives, who does what in their community, and so on. With this understanding, a person would gain much more insight from the Quran. When one is studying the ayat related to celestial objects, it would be greatly beneficial to have an understanding of basic astronomy. All these subjects support each other and there is no segmentation or division in them in terms of the 'deen' and 'dunya'. They all connect us to Allah swt if studied with an open and unbiased mind.

I can say from my own personal experience that when one studies the Quran with a view to making research into any problem, one will find an answer to it even in those verses that one had skipped over without

ever imagining that the solutions sought for lay hidden therein.

12.6 Consider each paragraph as a unit:

My suggestion for those people who wish to take maximum benefit from this book (i.e. *Tafheem ul Quran*, translated as *The Meaning of the Quran*) would be to carefully go through the introduction to each surah before beginning its study. As long as they are studying that surah, they should refer back to it periodically. It is suggested that each paragraph of *The Meaning of the Quran* may be made a unit of study. At first, the ayat that one intends to study on a particular day should be studied from the original Arabic Text with the help of some translation. You can select any suitable translation for that in Persian, Urdu, English, or any other language. After this, read the translation of the whole passage from *Tafheem ul Quran* without studying the explanation of the relevant ayat. If you follow this approach, the overall theme of the passage will become clear to you. After that, reflect on each individual ayah by reading the explanation provided for it.

I hope that if this approach is followed, the meanings of the Quran will surely become clear to the reader by the grace of Allah swt.

Comment

This paragraph has been taken from Deebacha of the Tafheem ul Quran as its contents were almost similar to a paragraph in Muqaddimah which came at this point.

The above paragraph not only explains the methodology of self-study but also a very useful approach that can be adopted to conduct the **Quran Circles**. Quran Circle refers to a group study approach in which some brothers and sisters get together and do a collective study of Quran. It is different from Dars of Quran (which is also required in various situations) in addition to the Quran circles. iCAN organizes Quran Circles at numerous locations around Australia. If you wish to start a Quran Circle in your locality too, you can adopt the above-mentioned approach. For any support, please feel free to reach out to us: www.fb.com/Islamic.Circle .

12.7 Be in the field! Experience the Badr and Hunain of your time!

Comment

The section below is one of the most important passages in this *muqaddimah*. It explains that if one has to truly connect with the message of the Quran, one has to go through the struggle that the Prophet ﷺ and his companions went through. He also has to go into the practical field and serve the mission of the Prophets. When this would happen, a reflector upon the Quran would feel as if the Quran is providing him guidance at every step of his struggle.

Despite all the devices and approaches mentioned above, one cannot grasp the inspiring spirit of the Quran unless one begins to put its message into practice, for the Quran is neither a book of abstract ideas and theories which may be studied in an easy chair nor is it a book of religious enigmas which could only be unraveled in monasteries and universities. It is a Book that has been sent down to invite people to start a movement and to lead its followers and direct their activities towards the achievement of its mission. Therefore, one has to go to the battlefield of life to understand the real meaning of the Quran. That was why a quiet and amiable person like our Master Muhammad ﷺ (Allah's peace be upon him) had to come out of his seclusion and start an Islamic

Movement and fight against the rebellious world. It was the Quran that urged him to declare war against every kind of falsehood and engage in conflict with the leaders of disbelief without any consideration of the consequences. Then this movement attracted good souls from every home and gathered them under the banner of its leader in order to fight against the upholders of the old order who organized themselves into a gang to oppose them. During this long and bitter struggle between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, which continued for almost twenty-three years, the Quran went on guiding the Movement in every phase and at every stage, until it succeeded in establishing the Islamic way of life in its perfection. It is thus obvious that one cannot possibly adequately grasp the truth contained in the Quran by mere recitation of its words. For this purpose, one must play an active part in the conflict between belief and unbelief, between Islam and un-Islam, and between truth and falsehood. One can understand it only if one takes up its message, invites the world to accept it, and moves on and on following its guidance. Thus alone will one experience, re-live, and understand all that which happened during the revelation of the Quran. One will meet with the same conditions that were experienced at Makkah, Ta'if, and Habash and pass through the same kind of fire that had to be

passed through at Badr, Uhd, Hunain, Tabuk, and other battlefields from where the men of Muhammad ﷺ passed through. In this struggle, one will face Abu Jahls and Abu Lahabs of his era and come across hypocrites, the double-faced, the Jews, and every type of people mentioned in the Quran. Incidentally, this is a wonderful experience of its own kind and worth the trial.

While passing through any one of these stages of this experience, one will find some verses and some Surahs of the Quran, which will themselves tell that they were revealed at such and such a stage and brought such and such instructions for the guidance of the Movement. In this way, the Quran will lay bare its spirit even though one might not be able to understand all the lexical meanings of its words and solve all the intricacies of grammar and rhetoric. The same formula applies to its commandments, its moral teachings, its instructions about economics and culture, and its laws regarding different aspects of human life. These things can never be understood unless they are put into practice. It is, thus, obvious that those individuals and communities who discard it from practical life, cannot understand its meaning and live its spirit by mere lip service to it.

12.8 Conclusion:

This [explanation of the Quran] is from me [and accordingly I cannot claim perfection in it] and the true and most perfect knowledge is with Allah; I have full trust in Him and turn to Him for true guidance.

As I do not intend to discuss in the *Introduction* all the problems which might arise during the study of the Quran, I have purposely left untouched those questions that might arise during the study of some verses or Surahs, for I want to deal with them in this *tafseer* of the Quran at their proper places. I have taken up only those questions and problems which pertain to the general study of the Quran as a whole. The reader is, therefore, requested to defer giving his final judgment on such questions till he has read the whole of the *tafseer*. Then, if he finds that some questions have not been answered at all or have not been dealt with fully, he should let me know about them for future consideration.

Syed Abul A ‘ala Maududi

13. APPENDIX: DEEBACHA OF TAFHEEM UL QURAN

The contents of this appendix have mainly been derived from the *Deebacha* of *Tafheem ul Quran* (translated by Muhammad Nabeel Musharraf).

13.1 Why did Maulana Maududi write *Tafheem ul Quran*?

Maulana Maududi explains:

Considering the amount of work that has already been done on the translation and *tafseer* of the Quran, it would not be the best use of time and energy to write another translation or *tafseer* only to attain *barakah* [when it is not to contribute to intellectual progress]. Such an extensive effort can only be justified if one is fulfilling anything that remained unaddressed in the previous literature or if one is providing an opportunity to the seekers of the knowledge of the Quran to fulfill a need that could not be fulfilled by the previous literature. The effort made in these pages below (i.e., in *Tafheem-ul-Quran*)

to represent the meaning of the Quran is from this perspective.

For a long time, I have felt the urge in our common educated people to get to the spirit of the Quran and to acquire a grip on its objective. This urge has remained unfulfilled despite the great efforts of translators and exegetists. On top of that, this urge is increasing day by day [Alhamdolillah]. I also had this feeling that I can play a role in quenching their thirst. It is the result of these two feelings that has resulted in this book that has been presented to you. If my humble effort could be of benefit to people in helping them understand the message of the Quran, it will be a matter of great happiness and blessing for me.

13.2 Who is the intended audience of *Tafheem ul Quran*?

Maulana Maududi explains:

While undertaking this work, my objective is neither the fulfillment of the needs of scholars and researchers nor the creation of a resource for those who have graduated in Arabic and Islamic sciences and now wish to do a detailed research-based study of the Quran. There is a lot available already that can quench their thirst.

The people that I intend to serve through this work are the mid-tier educated people who are not well-versed with Arabic language and it is not possible for them to directly benefit from the treasures of literature on the sciences of the Quran (Uloom Al-Quran). It is their needs that I have kept in consideration while undertaking this work. I have therefore not even touched many topics that carry a high significance in the in-depth *tafseer* studies but are not relevant to the needs of this group.

Another key objective that I set for myself was that a common man should be able to clearly and easily understand the objective and intent of the Quran when reading this *tafseer*; he should get the same impact from this as what Quran wishes to put on him. I have attempted to remove any difficulties that a layman could face while reading and have tried that any questions that come to his mind during his study should get immediately answered.

This is what I intended; it is now the readers who can decide how successful I have been in this. In any case, it is not the final word. I request all readers to inform me if they find that some aspect is not clear, or if any question remains un-answered, or if the intent and objective are not clear at any place. This would help me further improve this service. I also request the

scholars to inform me of my mistakes.

13.3 What is Maulana Maududi's approach toward translation?

My approach in this book has been 'free representation' rather than word-to-word translation. It is not because I consider the approach of word-to-word translation to be incorrect. The real reason for this is that I believe that this service has already been excellently done by several scholars and there is nothing that still remains to be done in this regard. For example, in Persian, the translation of Shah Waliullah is a very useful resource. In Urdu, the translation of Shah Rafi-ud-Din, Maulana Mahmood ul Hasan, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, and Hafiz Muhammad Saheb Jalandhari serve those needs and purposes very well which require a word-to-word translation. However, there are some needs that do not get fulfilled by word-to-word translations. I have tried to fulfill those needs through my above-mentioned approach to translation.

The benefit of word-to-word translations is that one becomes familiar with each and every word of the Quran and after reading the translation underneath the ayah, a person comes to know of what is mentioned in the ayah. However, there are some

aspects in which this approach is not very beneficial to a person not familiar with the Arabic language and accordingly he cannot benefit from it to the required level.

One of the things that one notices while reading word-to-word translations is a lack of smooth flow of sentences, impactfulness, eloquence of language, and the ability to influence the readers. While reading the word-to-word translation under the ayat, one finds such a life-less statement that neither uplifts his soul, nor he finds any chills in his body upon reading it; neither any tears come out of his eyes nor does he experience any storm of emotions. He does not feel as if something is conquering his mind and soul and marching toward his heart. Let alone these feelings, sometimes one even asks this question to himself, 'is it that book about which this challenge was given that if anybody can produce something similar to it, he should bring it forth!'

The reason for all this is that the sieve of translation only allows the dry parts of the medicine to pass through it; as far as the beauty of eloquence that each statement in the Quran is abundantly full of, none of it is able to pass through it. It remains above the sieve and dries off from there. The reality is that the impactfulness of the Quran is equally shared between

its pure teachings and message and its eloquence. It is this aspect of the Quran which melts even the hardest of hearts. It is this thunderbolt that rocked the whole of Arabia. It is this attribute of the Quran whose superiority was accepted by even its worst enemies; they were always afraid that if anyone listens to it, he will lose their heart to it. Had this beautiful eloquence not been there and had it been dry like the languages used in its translations, it would have never stormed the hearts of Arabs as it did.

Another reason why the word-to-word translations are not able to make an impact upon the readers is because such translations are usually written in between the Arabic text or on one half of the page while the other half contains the words of Allah. This approach is very suitable for the purposes for which one reads the word-to-word translation as one can see the meaning of each word and each ayah written opposite to it. However, its drawback is that one cannot benefit from reading the message of the Quran in continuity as he does in the case of other books; the impact is therefore lost. A statement from a language not known to him frequently comes in between the statements of the language he understands.

Another problem that is related particularly to the English translations is that they, following the

translations of the Bible, mention the translation of each ayah of the Quran numbered one by one. Take any good essay, divide its sentences, number them, write them on top of each other, and then read. You will feel it yourself that the type of impact that those strong statements make on you in the essay is lost; not even half of that impact remains when such an approach is followed.

Another reason why impactfulness is lost in translation is because the style of the Quran is that of a speech rather than that of commonly written works. If the Quranic text is translated in the manner of a written text and its style as a speech is ignored, the text starts to appear incoherent. The Quran was not sent down as a pre-written text; rather it came down in the form of Khutbahs which were revealed to the Prophet ﷺ as required during a particular stage of the Islamic movement. The Prophet ﷺ used to recite it to people in the form of a Khutbah.

There is a huge difference between the style of writing and the style of speech. For example:

- when writing about a matter, any doubts in that regard are mentioned first and then the answer is provided; whereas in speech, those who have the doubts are sitting in front. Therefore, many a time

it is not even required to mention that "people say this..". In a speech, the speaker often says something at the very beginning which itself is the answer to the doubt.

- In writing, if something is not directly about the subject but relevant to it, it is mentioned separately from the main body of the text in order to maintain continuity and flow. However, in speech, this can be achieved by merely changing the tone and manner of address. In this manner, a speaker continues to explain relevant topics without any negative effect on the impact and flow.
- In writing, certain words are to be used to establish a connection to the environment. However, in speech, the environment itself establishes its connection with the speech. One does not need to specifically point out the environmental factors; they remain clear to the listeners and they do not find any gap.
- In a speech, the speaker varies his addressees; sometimes they are mentioned as second persons and at other times as third. Sometimes he addresses the individuals and sometimes the groups. Sometimes he speaks on his own behalf and sometimes he explains what others say and speak on their behalf. Sometimes he talks as a representative of the Higher Power and sometimes

he directly quotes the words of the Higher Power.

These aspects create a beautiful impression in speech. However, the same things are not very impactful in the writings. That is the reason why when the spoken text is converted to a written form, one finds some disorganization in reading it. This feeling increases more and more as one distances away from the original environment in which the speech was delivered. The same is the case with those people who are oblivious to the style of the Quran; they falsely object about incoherence in it. One approach to alleviate such feelings is to add explanatory notes to make clear the meaning of the text. However, when translating to another language and converting a speech to text, one can also make careful use of the language of speech. Through this, one can easily eliminate the perceived incoherence.

In addition, as I have already explained above, every surah of the Quran was in reality a speech that was revealed at a particular stage of dawah towards Islam; accordingly, every surah carried a particular context. The surahs of the Quran have such a deep relation to this context that even if the meaning of every individual word is put forth in front of the reader, he will be unable to grasp many aspects. Not only that, but it is also possible that he might draw some

conclusions which would be completely contradictory to the intent of the Quran. In such a situation, he will never be able to have a holistic grip over what the Quran calls towards. When it comes to the Arabic text of the Quran, assistance is sought from the *tafseer* literature as nothing can be added to the original text of the Quran. However, when translating it to another language, we can take some freedom and use those words and sentences that relate the meaning to their context so that they become clearer and meaningful to the readers.

Another aspect that needs to be kept in consideration is that though the Quran is revealed in Al-Arabi Al-Mubeen (the clear Arabic language); however, it carries its own set of specific terminologies too. It frequently uses certain words to carry a particular connotation as opposed to the common dictionary meaning of those words. It also uses the same words for multiple meanings at different places within the text. It is almost impossible for the word-to-word translations to consider these terminological uses of words; it is because of this that the readers fall into confusion and misunderstandings. For example, consider the word '*kufr*'. The meaning of this 'term' in the Quran is very different from its lexical meaning as well as the terminological definition that our scholars

of *fiqh* and *kalam* put forth. Even within the Quran, it is not used to mean only one thing. Within the specific contexts in which it is used in the Quran, it conveys a range of meanings including 'a state of complete disbelief, 'denial', 'lack of gratitude', 'not fulfilling a particular requirement of being a believer', 'giving testimony by words while the actions do not support it', 'outward declaration of faith but lack of faith inside the heart', and so on. In all these different instances if we translate the word *Kufr* as disbelief only, or choose another word to use for translation in all these instances, the readers will either miss out on the proper meaning or develop a misunderstanding.

It is these shortcomings in the approach to translating the Quran word-to-word that I wish to avoid and it is for this reason that I have adopted the approach of 'fluent representation'. In this approach, I have not attempted to just put on the dress of Urdu language on to the words and ayat of the Quran. Rather, I have tried to carefully and diligently put in my language, as much as possible, what I understood from the ayat and the impact they left on my heart. My objective has been to avoid a particular feeling of a 'translated text' in this representation [and have tried to make it appear fluent and smoothly flowing]. I have attempted to translate from Al-Arabi Al-Mubeen – the

clear Arabic – to the clear Urdu [and tried to avoid the use of uncommon complex words], represent the speech as speech as much as possible, and transfer in Urdu representation not only the meaning of the words and sentences but also a reflection of the rhetorical style employed in the Quran [with the human limitations]. Such a fluent representation approach toward translation necessitated being free of strict compliance to the exact word-to-word meanings. However, this matter was that of the Quran and I have therefore been extremely careful in employing this freedom. As much as it was in my capability, I have tried to only use that much freedom which a particular ayah allowed; I have tried my best to not cross the limits of freedom given therein.

13.4 How is the context of Surahs and groups of ayat clarified in the *Tafheem-ul-Quran*?

As it is required to understand the context of the Surahs and ayat in order to understand the message completely, and as it was not possible to accomplish this fully through the fluent representation of each ayah, I have provided a context and introduction to each surah in its beginning. In these introductions, I have tried to explain, in a research-oriented and scholarly manner, the period of the revelation of that surah, the situation and circumstances at the time of

its revelation, the stage that the Islamic movement was going through, and its needs and problems at that time. If a group of ayat required an explanation of its own specific context, I have added an explanation about it in the footnotes.

13.5 The approach adopted in the footnotes

Maulana Maududi summarizes his approach about the footnotes as follows:

I have tried to the best my ability that no such debate should be included in the footnotes which could deviate readers' attention away from the Quran towards something else. All the footnotes that I have written have been written at only two types of places:

- One, at those places where I thought that a common reader would require additional explanation or where some questions would arise in his mind, or he would be exposed to some doubt.
- Two, where I thought that the reader would quickly pass through this point and would not be able to grasp the key message of the Quran.

13.6 When was the writing of *Tafheem-ul-Quran* completed?

Maulana Maududi explains:

I started writing this book in Muharram 1361AH (Feb, 1946). This work continued for five years till the time the fluent representation (referred to as '*Tarjumani*') and *Tafheem* was prepared till Surah Yusuf. After that, many unforeseen things happened one after the other that I could not write any further. I also could not find an opportunity to review what was written till that time in order to convert it into the form of a book. Now call it something good or something not so good, I got arrested under the public safety act in October 1948 and was sent to jail. This provided me with an opportunity to work on this project again and prepare it for going to press for publication. I pray to Allah swt to fulfill the objective for which I undertook this effort. I pray for this book to become helpful to the servants of God in acquiring an understanding of the Quran. "And my Taufique is from no one but Allah; He is Al-Ali, Al-Adheem.

Syed Abul Aala Maududi

New Central Jail, Multan – 11 September 1949

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